

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN WARNER led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, November 11, 2003.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN WARNER, a Senator from the State of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNER thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning we will acknowledge and pay tribute to our veterans with a moment of silence beginning at 11 a.m. Following the moment of silence, we have a number of Members who would like to make statements regarding Veterans Day. Those tributes will continue until 12 p.m., and I invite Senators to come to the floor during this period. Also, we have a resolution honoring this country's veterans and we will consider that resolution during today's session.

At noon, it is my expectation to begin consideration of the Syria accountability bill. That bill will be considered under the 90-minute debate limitation and, therefore, Members can expect a vote on passage following today's policy luncheon.

The Senate will recess today from 12:30 until 2:15 to accommodate the Republican Party luncheon. The Senate will recess tomorrow for that same period for the Democratic Party luncheon to meet.

Today, I would also hope to consider the Defense authorization conference report. Chairman WARNER will be here for his statement, and it is my hope we could reach a short time agreement to finish that legislation on this day. The Military Construction appropriations conference report is available and should be addressed as well.

Having said that, we will have roll-call votes today.

HONORING OUR VETERANS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today, our forces for freedom encircle the globe.

Our military men and women will observe Veterans Day in almost all of the world's time zones. In the skies, on the ground, and under the water, they will pause to remember.

In a few moments, we, too, will pause to remember.

As Senators, we have had the opportunity to work alongside so many who served our Nation so ably, and so nobly, during our country's struggles on behalf of freedom—heroes such as Strom Thurmond and Bob Dole, heroes such as JOHN MCCAIN and Bob Kerrey, heroes such as Max Cleland and CHUCK HAGEL, heroes such as DAN INOUE. We have seen how they and others have sacrificed and suffered for a cause greater than themselves. Their nobility and grace, in war and in peace, stand as examples to all in our new century and in the new conflict we fight today.

We work in an institution that values unlimited speech—sometimes speech over everything else. But in my years of working alongside these heroes, I have discovered a lesson that runs true for all of them. To me it has been in these silences, the times they have not joined in with the majority of their colleagues, that they have demonstrated their strength.

Our Nation is a cacophony of noise, a symphony of sound, from that factory floor to the market floor, from Main Street to Wall Street. It is the so-called roar of democracy that makes us unique as a nation and as a country. But this morning we are called to silence. Why?

In our Nation's battles throughout her last two centuries, many have paid the ultimate sacrifice for freedom and liberty. This moment of silence we will shortly observe is the silence of those voices stilled forever, of sons and daughters no longer returning home, of husbands and wives no longer there for each other, of mothers and fathers no longer there for their children day and night.

In the pain of these sacrifices, our warriors have built our country and saved our world. They have stood as freedom's sentinel and as liberty's shield. They have fought the fights to which history has called us and won the victories that faith has dared us.

Our Nation is the beacon of liberty for so many people around the world, and it is the valor and dedication of the many heroes, sung and unsung, throughout the Nation's past 200 years—those who sleep forevermore—who have made it so. We honor them today not with noise but with silence.

As the hour of 11 a.m. approaches, I ask that we do observe this moment of silence.

I come from the great State of Tennessee. We have our share of hallowed war dead. We have our share of heroes, including perhaps one of the most famous Medal of Honor winners, Sergeant York. In a chain of events still astonishing today, he led a small squad of just 7 men in charging a machine gun nest mercilessly attacking his po-

sition, ultimately capturing 132 prisoners. An observer termed what he did "a call to courage."

I encourage every American today to also take a moment of silence and look for those who have answered that call to courage. All throughout our country, every day our veterans merit our support, our respect, our thanks for advancing the cause of liberty here at home and indeed around the world. They took what was granted to them by their fathers and, with their service and with their labors, they passed it on to their children, bringing America still free into a new century.

We pass legislation on their behalf to express the thanks—our thanks—of this grateful Nation. Today's silence is for them as well.

Now our country fights a new enemy, faceless and hateful. It fights in new ways, bringing new terrors and threats and intimidations to our fellow Americans. That is the final lesson our moment of silence teaches us this morning.

Together let's remember the strength of silence and, as we resume our labors here today, just as our Armed Forces work today around the world, let us move ahead with a little less noise and a little more fortitude.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The distinguished minority leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, each year, America honors its veterans on this day with solemn pride.

But this year, Veterans Day arrives with uncommon poignancy. As we show our gratitude to our veterans here at home, a new generation of soldiers is thousands of miles from their loved ones, facing danger on our behalf.

There is an immediacy to this year's Veterans Day. The risks our soldiers are facing today have not yet been softened by memory. Without the filter of history, we see clearly the dangers they face every day when we learn of yet another attack on American soldiers, yet another death, yet another family that must go on without a loved one. At the same time, we see clearly the good that American service men and women can perform when we witness the hopeful faces of Iraqis eager for a better, more peaceful life.

Within the service of today's soldiers, we may see a clear reflection of the service of our veterans. Just as our soldiers today, our veterans, too, left families behind. They, too, woke up to uncertain dangers. They, too, saw friends and comrades injured or killed. Yet, knowing both their risks and their obligations, they, too, performed their duty each day.

Forty years ago, President Kennedy noted that no nation "in the history of the world has buried its soldiers farther from its native soil than we Americans—or closer to the towns in which they grew up."

At our proudest moments, the American people have sent our sons and daughters across the globe to fight for

freedom. And once the fight was done, we have welcomed them home with honor and gratitude.

Today, too, the honor of defending those who cannot defend themselves is carried forward by young American soldiers. And their families and friends wait anxiously for their safe return.

South Dakota is proud of the role its sons and daughters have played in Operation Iraqi Freedom. At the start of the war, it was a B-1 bomber crew from Ellsworth Air Force Base's 28th Bomb Wing that hit that bunker in Baghdad where it was thought the Iraqi leadership might have been hiding. All four members of the crew were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Staff Sergeant Randy Meyer, a Marine from Big Stone City, was part of a unit that discovered 22 American prisoners of war along a highway near Baghdad.

Sergeant Meyer noticed that Specialist Shoshanna Johnson was too hurt to walk—she had been shot in both ankles—so he picked her up and carried her to safety.

And South Dakota's National Guard and Reserve units have been on the front lines, both during the active fighting and today as we work to stabilize Iraq and rebuild the nation of Iraq.

Their service on this day is doubled. Because in addition to advancing democracy and security, their brave acts make us still more aware of, and still more grateful for, the brave acts of our veterans.

But alongside our pride, Veterans Day comes with a challenge. Each year we should ask ourselves, have we done enough to honor the sacrifices of our soldiers and veterans?

This year, if we are honest with ourselves, the answer must be no.

Mr. President, in keeping with our agreement to stop for a moment of silence at 11 o'clock, I will do so and return to my remarks as soon as the moment of silence has been completed.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will observe a moment of silence.

(Moment of Silence.)

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I am hard pressed to recall a time when the gap between the demands we place on our soldiers and the thanks we offer them once they return home has been wider. It is bitterly ironic that on this Veterans Day, while soldiers are facing danger far from home, the gap is still growing.

Today, more than 500,000 American soldiers are stationed in 137 different countries around the world. More than 300,000 are engaged in active combat or peacekeeping missions in seven different countries, including more than 140,000 in Iraq and Afghanistan.

More than 400 American soldiers have been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 2,400 have been wounded.

Meanwhile, our military is stretched so thin we cannot tell many of our sol-

diers or their families when they might be coming home. And despite the added strain and the ever more complicated mission, we are failing to provide for our soldiers, our veterans, and their families.

Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom will join 250,000 veterans who must wait 6 months just to see a V.A. hospital doctor.

This wait will be lengthened by the administration's closing of seven Veterans Hospitals and a budget that under-funds veterans health by \$1.8 billion.

In addition, the administration has opposed expanding health care benefits to Guard Members and Reservists and their families. It proposed cutting the pay to troops facing imminent danger. Schools for the children of military families are being threatened with cuts. And the Defense Department is closing 19 commissaries and considering whether to close 19 more.

In a recent article in "The Army Times," a representative from the National Military Family Association was quoted asking a question familiar to many of us today. "How can leadership be talking about cutting back on quality-of-life benefits right now when the force and everyone supporting the force is at such a high stress level?"

One colonel quoted in the article expressed it more simply: "Betrayal," he said to the reporter. "Write that down and put it in your report."

In signing the GI Bill of Rights in 1944, President Roosevelt noted that "the members of the Armed Forces have been compelled to make greater . . . sacrifice than the rest of us, and they are entitled to definite action to help take care of their special problems."

Each year, we are in danger of falling further behind in our obligation to our veterans. Recently, "definite action" has given way to little more than indefinite praise.

Veterans deserve better.

Some within this administration seem to believe that our responsibility to our soldiers ends when they come home. We disagree. These men and women risked their lives to defend our own. They stood up for us; now we must stand up for them, not with words but with deeds.

Mr. President, not long ago, a teacher from a small town in the Black Hills of South Dakota gave her students an assignment. She asked them to tell the stories of each of the 2,200 South Dakotans who gave their lives in the fight for democracy during World War II.

As word spread of the children's work, the teacher was asked to bring the program to the entire State.

In doing their research, South Dakota's children discovered some amazing things. They found that Native American—treated within their own country as second-class citizens—rushed to enlist in record numbers. They found young men who had failed their physicals, but used a cousin's or a sib-

ling's results to sneak into the service. They found youngest sons—and only sons—who could easily have gotten deferments, but instead demanded to serve.

They also found official military records that listed the wrong home county for an extraordinary number of the South Dakotans killed in the war. At first, the students were puzzled. After a while, though, they discovered the reason: So many counties had over-filled their enrollment caps, that young men would claim to be from another county, just to be allowed to serve their Nation.

All told, 68,000 South Dakotans enrolled in the Armed Services in WWII. My father was one of them. Two thousand two hundred of them never came home—a greater percentage of World War II deaths than any other State.

Those who did make it home passed that same sense of loyalty and duty onto their sons and daughters. During the Vietnam war, 78 percent of South Dakota's eligible young men chose to serve.

That was, by far, the highest percentage in the Nation. I was one of them. I was lucky. Two hundred South Dakotans who went to Vietnam didn't make it back.

This year, too, South Dakotans have proven eager to serve. South Dakota has one of the highest proportions of our citizens serving in active duty in Iraq of any State in the country.

South Dakota knows the true meaning of patriotism. We have sent out sons and daughters off to war, welcomed those who returned, and buried those that did not.

We volunteer without boast or complaint. The rewards of citizenship are great, therefore, the demands are great.

Having sent so many young people off to war, South Dakotans feel the tight bond that develops between soldiers and the communities they defend. And we know that the debt we owe to veterans cannot be repaid on this day alone.

We enjoy our freedoms every day, and every day we must remember those by whose courage they were purchased.

We must express our gratitude in both word and deed and commit ourselves to their care, as they committed themselves to our protection.

Today, we witness the courage of our soldiers serving throughout the world and remember the courage of veterans throughout our history. Never once did they fall short of our expectations of them. Today, we must recommit ourselves to making sure we do not fall short of their expectations of us.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my remarks be taken from my leader time, not from the morning business time allocated for this tribute this morning.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.